

THE FIRST WORD

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA

THIS ISSUE FEATURES

- A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR SEAN
- ASH WEDNESDAY
- BUILDING UPDATE
- IN PRAISE OF WOMEN WHO LEAD
- NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY
- ACTIVE FAITH OPPORTUNITIES
- MARCH 2025 CALENDAR



A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR SEAN

WRITTEN BY PASTOR SEAN DEVOLITES

Hey friends,

How is it with your soul?

This question has been a part of our United Methodist tradition dating back to John Wesley and his time spent in small group studies. As we enter the season of Lent this month, we will spend time reflecting on this question together in worship as well as

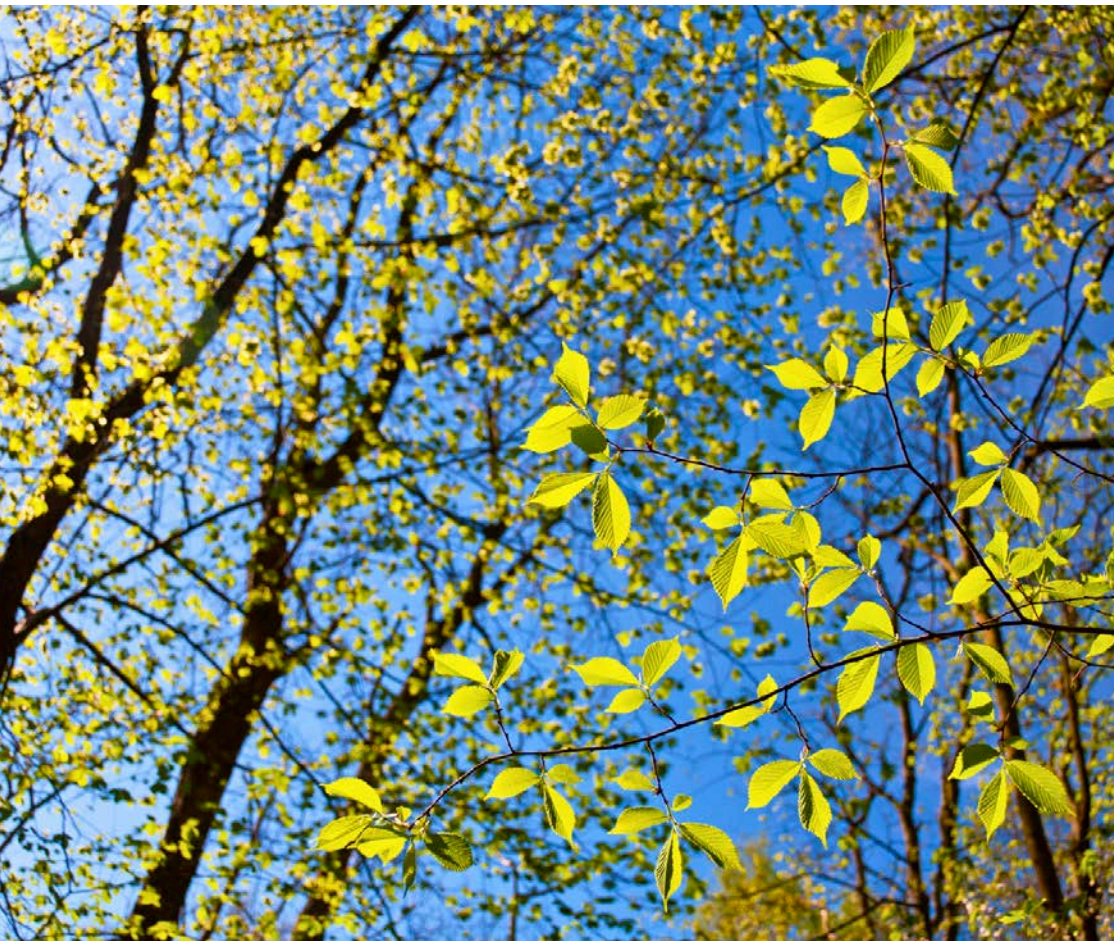
we begin a series entitled *Oh My Soul*.

As an additional resource, our worship will reference Howard Thurman's book *Jesus and the Disinherited*. We will think about all the ways we inherit a promise from God to be with us to the ends of the Earth, and to see how Christ frees us to see the world in a unique way.

How can the "soul" work we do with God free us for a life of hope, justice, and love for God and one another? This will be the work we do leading up to Easter in April.

You can also find updates in this newsletter on our Building process at our Apple Pie Ridge campus as we continue to take steps forward on that journey.

continued on page 2



continued from page 1

Please know how grateful I am for you, and for the ways this church community continues to lead in creating spaces for people to experience God's grace and find connection in Winchester, Frederick County, and beyond.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Sean

“

*You have heard
that it was said,
'You shall love your
neighbor and
hate your enemy.'
But I say to you:
Love your enemies
and pray for
those who
persecute you*

**– MATTHEW
5:43-44**

FUMC CONTACT INFORMATION

STAFF

Rev. Sean Devolites
Pastor

Caroline Oxley
Communications
Manager

Melody Harmon
Music Director

Peter Uhler
Accompanist

OUR LEADERSHIP

JoEllen Smith
Admin. Leadership
Team Chair

Stacey Stickley
Lay Leader

Becky Starliper
Treasurer

LOCATIONS

Sunday Worship Location
The Village at Orchard
Ridge
400 Clocktower Ridge
Drive, Winchester, VA
22603

Outdoor Worship & Events
APR Outdoor Campus
362 Apple Pie Ridge Rd.
Winchester, VA 22603

Office Campus
1824 Roberts St.
Winchester, VA 22601

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 1516
Winchester, VA 22604

PHONE

540-662-3151

EMAIL

fumcoffice@
fumcwinchester.org



ASH WEDNESDAY

WRITTEN BY DR. LISA HANCOCK

“Beware of practicing your piety before others” (Matthew 6:1). Not exactly the exhortation I’m looking for when planning worship for Ash Wednesday. Isn’t the whole point of coming together to worship, confess, and repent as we enter the season of Lent? Shouldn’t we be leading our people into practices of individual and corporate piety? Yes, and yes!

Thankfully, Jesus isn’t telling us not to practice our piety together. Jesus tells us not to practice our piety before others. In other words, we need to be clear about why we come to worship on this day. It’s not about showing one another how righteous we are. Our piety is about properly ordering ourselves before God and then neighbor. On Ash Wednesday, especially, we gather to confess and repent to realign ourselves with the truth that God is God, and we are not. And then,

properly ordered in relationship to God, we can learn to love our neighbor as ourselves.

There is a gravity to Ash Wednesday that, honestly, feels a bit odd some years. We’ve just encountered the glory of Transfiguration Sunday, and suddenly we’re plunged into the solemn reminder that we are fragile earth beings, made of dust and returning to the dust when we die. The suddenness of this transition can sometimes make us veer into one extreme or another. Some might decide not to make a big deal of Ash Wednesday, to downplay the importance of confession, repentance, and grappling with our frailty within the worship service. Others might decide to overcorrect, heaping on double helpings of shame and blame to try to convince us to care about our sinfulness and mortality. Such services can feel like previews of Good Friday, and while it’s true that for many, Lent is bookended with Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Ash Wednesday is not about over-anticipating the crucifixion.

Instead, Ash Wednesday is about refocusing and realigning ourselves in relationship to God and one another. We must encounter our sinfulness and frailty not with shame and blame but with honesty and truth, trusting that God receives our confession. So, live into the prayer of confession and repentance as an anchor for the whole service. Imbue the confession with honest naming and recognition of individual and systemic sin. Let confession testify to the realities of the brokenness in our world that we perpetuate. And guide your people into words and acts of repentance that are as robust as their confession. Celebrate—yes, celebrate—that God’s grace empowers us to turn from sin and toward God.

We are dust and to dust we shall return. This is a statement of truth, not confession. We are called to repent and believe the gospel so that we can live in the truth of our beautiful frailty and dependence on God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.



JANUARY 2025 FINANCES

We're kicking off to a great start!

First UMC's Becky Starliper reported that Jan. 2025 income totaled \$23,718.46 while Jan. 2025 expenses totaled \$18,726.79, leaving a positive net total of \$4,991.67.

WINCHESTER RESCUE MISSION 2025

Save the date(s) to volunteer at the Winchester Rescue Mission with First Church!

We're planning on cooking and serving dinner on the following dates: March 21, May 19, Sept. 15, and Nov. 17. Dinner is served at 5:30 p.m. and is usually done by 6:15 p.m. Volunteer sign-up sheets will be available at Sunday worship. If you're interested in helping but cannot attend, please note that monetary donations towards the dinner are welcome. Thank you!

BUILDING UPDATE

WRITTEN BY PASTOR SEAN DEVOLITES

On Tuesday, February 25 th Building Chair Randy Moulton and I met with the Shenandoah River District Board of Building and Location to share our current plans for a new facility on our Apple Pie Ridge Campus. The Committee was very supportive of our work, not only in the current design of the space but also in the work we have done as a congregation to support our local community through our ministry.

We were approved to move forward in seeking financing options and detailed design plans.

When those are complete and assembled, we will be scheduling a Church Conference to approve the Building Committee's work and prepare to break ground. This will move quickly, but I would still expect that preparation to take a few weeks prior to announcing that Church Conference date.

FOURTH SUNDAY FELLOWSHIP

In February, we kicked off our new “4th Sunday Fellowship” opportunity with conversation, coffee, and treats! We will continue this gathering this month, on March 23rd immediately following our 10 a.m. worship services.

If anyone has any ideas about enhancing our gatherings with refreshments or topics of conversation, please reach out to Jill Johnson or Stacey Stickley.

See you on March 23!



IN PRAISE OF WOMEN WHO LEAD

WRITTEN BY DR. LISA
HANCOCK

Over the years, Christians have done a good job of heaping historical and cultural baggage onto Proverbs 31, which makes it hard to come to the text with a fresh perspective. So, “Where is the uncommon wisdom in this text? How might this text be intended to surprise us? What hints of the brash and honest Lady Wisdom do we find lurking in this description of ‘a capable wife?’”

Instead of focusing solely on the wives and mothers in our communities, Proverbs 31 offers us a portrait of women who lead and live in wisdom. Thus, it is a good opportunity, separate from

Mother’s Day, to emphasize the role and leadership of the women in our congregation and everywhere. We sing many hymns by female hymn writers and lift up the voices of women theologians throughout Christian history in our discussions and prayers.

Proverbs 31 calls us to recognize and follow women in leadership every day, not just one or two Sundays a year. Proverbs 31’s description of a woman who fears the Lord is one of day-in-and-day-out leadership, relationship, and labor. Centering the voice and leadership of women in worship today is now a consistent effort in United Methodist churches. Women have long been important leaders in the United Methodist movement, though the road to women’s ordination has been bumpy.

Note: As of the 2023 VA Conference statistics, 51 percent of our pastors are women!

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES

On Wednesday, March 5th, you can worship with us at 10 a.m. at The Village at Orchard Ridge or at 7 p.m. at Montague Avenue UMC to celebrate Ash Wednesday.

We hope to see you there!



50%

of your donation remains in your local conference

25%

of your donation funds scholarships for Native Americans

25%

of your donation funds outreach and ministry grants

NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY



NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY

WRITTEN BY UMC COMMUNICATIONS & JOELLEN SMITH

Did you know that funds collected for Native American Ministries Sunday partner with existing Native American ministries to create beneficial programs?

A gap in knowledge exists in The United Methodist Church, in congregations and other United Methodist entities, relative to comprehending concepts of Native American life, cultures, languages, spirit, values, contemporary issues, and such. We affirm the sacredness of indigenous people, their languages, cultures, and gifts to the church and the world.

Donations support vital ministries and churches in the Native American communities and allow The UMC to partner with existing native ministries to develop new programs on behalf of Native Americans. Some of those efforts include mentoring programs, peer support systems, funding for economic development projects, and restoring traditional and historic ways that bring forth new leaders for Native American communities.

About Native American Ministries Sunday (NAMS)

Native American Ministries Sunday serves to remind United Methodists of the gifts and contributions made by Native Americans to our society. With more than 20,000 Native Americans within the denomination, this special

Sunday helps to ensure that Native American United Methodist leaders are recognized. It was officially recognized in 1988 and has been celebrated since 1989. An offering is taken on this Special Sunday to develop and strengthen Native American ministries in the Annual Conferences, Native American rural, urban, reservation ministries and communities relating to the General Board of Global Ministries. It also provides scholarships for Native Americans attending United Methodist schools of theology distributed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. First UMC will support this Special Sunday Offering on March 9, 2025.

Please keep the following individuals in your prayers:

- Aleane Wine
- Alice Disque
- Andy Kiser
- Cecil Campbell
- Charles Ewing
- Danna Paul
- Deidre Kriewald
- Dorothy Uhler
- Dwain & Shirley Place
- Ellen Suite
- Gary Fisher
- Harold Zieg
- Jean Moyer
- Jeri Mahan
- Jesse Potts
- John Shepard
- Joy Costello
- Ken Freeman
- Kevin Freeland
- Lynn Smith
- Marlene Fisher
- Mark Baron
- Mel Littlepage
- Melinda Russell
- Petro Holinka
- Phyllis Lee
- Rev. Keiko Foster
- Terry Hannon
- Toni O'Connor
- Verle Malik

If you would like to add someone to our First UMC prayer list, please reach out to the church office or email us at

fumcoffice@fumcwinchester.org



ACTIVE FAITH OPPORTUNITIES

- **March 9:** First UMC will be holding a Charge Conference immediately following 10 a.m. worship to approve the parsonage sale.
- **March 20 from 1-3 p.m.:** Help pack and sort items at CCAP! We meet on site at 112 S. Kent St. Winchester, VA.
- **March 21, May 19, Sept. 15, & Nov. 17 from 4-6 p.m.:** Come volunteer to cook and serve dinner at the Winchester Rescue Mission with First Church! Sign-up sheets will be available at Sunday worship.
- **March 23:** Join First UMC in 4th Sunday Fellowship after 10 a.m. worship! Get to know your First UMC family while enjoying light refreshments.

Ongoing opportunities:

- **Help lead our adult or children Sunday School(s)** at 9 a.m. on Sundays. Interested? Reach out to Pastor Sean.
- **Join the First UMC Choir,** rehearsals immediately follow Sunday worship.
- **Next Generation Youth Group:** Calling ages 10-18 to Next Generation Youth Group! Activities and outings are planned to let your child(ren) socialize and explore their faith alongside kids from FUMC, Brucetown, Montague Ave, Emmanuel, and John Mann UMC. Interested? Contact Robbin Wilfong.
- **Join the Building Connections Committee** to help dream up ideas, events and activities that First UMC can offer to members and the community. Interested? Contact Stacey Stickley at #540-974-1299.

FEBRUARY 2025

FIRST UMC SCHEDULE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
23 10 AM WORSHIP @ TVOR 11 AM CHOIR PRACTICE @ TVOR	24	25 10 AM ONLINE WORSHIP ON FACEBOOK & YOUTUBE	26	27	28	1 MARCH NEWSLETTER GOES OUT
2 10 AM WORSHIP @ TVOR 11 AM CHOIR PRACTICE @ TVOR	3	4 10 AM ONLINE WORSHIP ON FACEBOOK & YOUTUBE	5 ASH WEDNESDAY 10 A.M. WORSHIP SERVICE @ TVOR 7 P.M. WORSHIP SERVICE @ MONTAGUE AVE. LENT BEGINS	6	7	8 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 
9 NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY 10 AM WORSHIP @ TVOR 11 AM CHARGE CONFERENCE @ TVOR	10  DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS!	11 10 AM ONLINE WORSHIP ON FACEBOOK & YOUTUBE	12	13 6:45 PM ADMIN LEADERSHIP TEAM MTG.	14	15
16 10 AM WORSHIP @ TVOR 11 AM CHOIR PRACTICE @ TVOR	17 ST. PATRICK'S DAY 	18 10 AM ONLINE WORSHIP ON FACEBOOK & YOUTUBE	19	20 1-3 PM PACK & SORT ITEMS @ CCAP 112 S. KENT ST. APRIL NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE	21 4-6 P.M. COOK & SERVE DINNER @ WINCHESTER RESCUE MISSION!	22
23 10 AM WORSHIP @ TVOR 11 AM 4TH SUNDAY FELLOWSHIP @ TVOR	24	25 10 AM ONLINE WORSHIP ON FACEBOOK & YOUTUBE	26	27	28	29
30 10 AM WORSHIP @ TVOR	31	1 	2	3 APRIL NEWSLETTER GOES OUT	4	5

First United Methodist Church
PO Box 1516
Winchester VA 22604

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ



OUR STAFF

Rev. Sean Devolites
Pastor

Caroline Oxley
Communications Manager

Melody Harmon
Music Director

Peter Uhlir
Accompanist

OUR LEADERSHIP

JoEllen Smith
Administrative Leadership
Team Chair

Stacey Stickley
Lay Leader

Becky Starliper
Treasurer

Locations:

Office Campus

1824 Roberts St. Winchester, VA 22601

Sunday Worship

The Village at Orchard Ridge Chapel
400 Clocktower Ridge Drive,
Winchester, VA 22603

Outdoor Worship & Events

Apple Pie Ridge Outdoor Campus
362 Apple Pie Ridge Road,
Winchester, VA 22603

Mailing Address

PO Box 1516, Winchester, VA 22604

Contact Us

Office Hours: Mon - Thurs, 9AM - 2 PM

Phone: 540-662-3151

E-Mail: fumcoffice@fumcwinchester.org

Website: fumcwinchester.umcchurches.org

Facebook: FirstUMCWinchester

Instagram: @first.umc.winc